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Retraining Plans

There are a number of issues that come up in the preparation and implementation of retraining plans. This section is intended to give you information that will be helpful in guiding you to complete and manage plans effectively and efficiently.

We would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that, in all cases, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor assigned to a referral is ultimately responsible for all the requirements and department expectations for completing and monitoring retraining plans.

The following items clarify definitions, expectations and some procedures.

Approved plan services that occur prior to the plan start date

The following are services/fees that the department may cover prior to a plan start date and outlines the procedure for adjudicating bills for dates of service prior to a plan start date.

Registration fees – these are becoming increasingly common and need to be billed as tuition (R0310).

Rent, Food, Utilities and Furniture rental – Payment for these items may be made up to 29 days prior to a plan start date in order for a worker to move and get settled before training starts.

Procedure

All of the above services require prior authorization by the claims manager.

Bills for services incurred prior to a plan start date will not be paid prior to the date the department formally approves the plan. The bills will be held in suspense until the plan is approved.

Travel – The retraining travel procedure code, 0310R, is not payable prior to a plan start date. Travel that occurs prior to a plan start date is generally to a jobsite to evaluate whether a particular job goal is reasonable, or to a school to pay for registration, books or look over the campus. These types of trips are not part of a retraining plan and should be billed by the worker under V0028. Travel to appointments with the VRC should also be billed under V0028.

Definitions of some plan procedure codes

The department has created definitions of the various items to be approved under the following retraining codes.

R0312 Supplies

Consumable goods such as paper, pens, floppy discs, disposable gloves, etc.

R0315 Equipment, Tools

Items such as a calculator, software, survey equipment, welding gloves & hood, bicycle repair kits, mechanics tools, etc.

R0350 Other

Professional uniforms, including uniform shoes, required for training, and other items that don't fit the more defined categories. Items purchased under "other expenses" must be for vocational rehabilitation retraining. The department does not have the authority to purchase glasses, hearing aids, dental work, clothes for interviews, or other items as a way to remove barriers during retraining.

Bills for Food

Bills for food include grocery and restaurant purchases while the injured worker is participating in an approved plan. The Vocational Provider must review charges for these expenses for inappropriate items (e.g. personal items, alcohol, paper and cleaning products, tobacco, pet food, etc.) and to ensure each date of purchase is itemized on the bill. Charges for food, combined in weekly or monthly date spans, will no longer be allowed. Each food purchase must be listed on a separate line on the bill for each date food is purchased. This will help alleviate confusion the department has experienced with possible duplicates, for example, when date spans have overlapped on separate bills. Receipts are always required for any item(s) purchased by the worker. Copies of receipts are acceptable. The Provider and/or the injured worker should also retain a copy of receipts.

The injured worker may not request reimbursement over the monthly-allowed per diem amount. It is the vocational provider's responsibility to monitor the bills to ensure the worker does not exceed their monthly allotment for food.

The Vocational Provider should review the receipts, deduct personal and other non-covered items and sign the Statement for Retraining and Job Modification Services in the Remarks filed on the bottom of the form.

Once the Vocational Provider signs the Statement for Retraining and Job Modification Services form the department will assume the Provider has reviewed the bill and receipts, removed inappropriate charges and has verified the charges are within the injured workers per diem allotment for that month. It is very important to conduct this review carefully because it could impact the total approved amount for this item in a plan.

Mileage on Transportation Cost Encumbrance

The department's automated bill payment system accommodates mileage only in whole miles. It is unable to use tenths of miles in its calculation. The general guidance for establishing the reimbursement for mileage is to calculate the mileage point to point, rounding each planned trip up to the nearest whole mile. This will help ensure there are adequate funds allotted for transportation costs.

If you have any questions on completing the Transportation Cost Encumbrance form, please contact the unit Vocational Services Consultant.

Services Payable during a plan interrupt

Some expenses related to retraining plans can be paid during a period of plan interruption. This generally occurs during the break between either the spring and fall quarters or summer and fall quarters. The department may continue to pay rent and utility expenses for a second residence during an approved

interrupt in a plan. Books and supplies that are required for the following school term could also be paid during a plan interruption if the injured worker wishes to purchase these prior to the start of that term.

Under no circumstances will the department cover transportation costs or childcare during periods of plan interruption. If a worker travels to keep appointments with his or her counselor, that mileage would be billed under the regular vocational travel code (V0028) and should be billed on a separate travel voucher from retraining travel.

The Vocational Retraining plan cost encumbrance must include sufficient funds to pay for any services being requested to be covered during a period of plan interruption.

Physical and Occupational Therapists' Assisting Vocational Providers on Job Analyses

This article clarifies Physical and Occupational Therapists' role in the preparation of job analyses during a vocational referral. Physical (PTs) and Occupational Therapists (OTs) may assist with the performance of job analyses when their expertise and training will provide valuable information to the Vocational Rehabilitation Provider preparing the job analyses. The department will only reimburse PTs and OTs when the claim manager has authorized the services in advance. PTs and OTs should bill for their services using code 0389R. For additional information on billing procedures using this code, refer to Provider Bulletin 01-03 Vocational Rehabilitation Payment Guidelines, pages 9-10.

The PT/OT may provide information or material regarding the physical demands of a job that they have analyzed to the assigned vocational rehabilitation counselor (VRC) which will enable the VRC to complete a job analysis. The assigned VRC may incorporate the information or material from the OT/PT into the job analysis. The assigned VRC is exclusively responsible for all work performed on a referral. In **all** cases, the final job analysis is the work product of the individual vocational rehabilitation counselor to whom the referral is assigned. The assigned VRC **must** review and sign any job analysis submitted in support of a vocational determination.

When there is not a vocational referral, PTs and OTs may perform an analysis of the physical demands of a worker's job if that analysis is authorized in advance by the claim manager and is needed to develop a treatment plan. The therapist would bill for the services using code 0389R. If a vocational referral is opened after such an analysis has been completed, the counselor must follow the requirements noted above.